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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9617
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 8690
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 6050
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0013
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 7235
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 4281
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0293
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 4614
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 6043
RUEHQD/AMEMBASSY QUITO 6898
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 1676
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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV KDEM PREL PINR OPDC OPRC BL

SUBJECT: MORALES BASHES GOLDBERG PINATA ONE MORE TIME

Classified By: Acting EcoPol Chief Brian Quigley for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Meeting with cabinet on December 30 to evaluate his third year in office, Bolivian President Evo Morales justified once again his decision to expel Ambassador Philip S. Goldberg. Morales noted that with the departure of Ambassador Goldberg, the political opposition had "bottomed out," and concluded that Goldberg was "clearly commanding the conspiracy against democracy" in Bolivia. Morales went on to praise Bolivia's efforts against narco-trafficking, calling Bolivia the "most outstanding country in Latin America" in the fight against drugs. Nevertheless, Morales restated his hope that bilateral relations would improve under President-elect Obama. Post questions Morales' logic, but understands that in the face of declining natural gas prices and corruption scandals within his administration, Morales needs to distract domestic attention by using the U.S. as his strawman once again. End summary.

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Should Old Acquaintance Be Forgot
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¶2. (U) In a year-end meeting December 30 to evaluate his third year in office, President Evo Morales took time to validate and celebrate his decision on September 11 to expel Ambassador Philip Goldberg, whom he accused of leading a conspiracy to topple the Morales regime. "After suffering that attack of the (political) right, of the empire, I was not wrong in that moment when I decided the Ambassador had to leave. The Ambassador leaves, the opposition bottoms out -- clearly someone was commanding the conspiracy against democracy, even against the national government itself."

¶3. (U) Morales went on to accuse the Bush administration of violating its international commitments in the fight against narco-trafficking, saying Bolivia "is the most outstanding country in Latin America in the fight against drug trafficking." Local press reports and even the government's own media service noted that the precipitous fall in relations had been exacerbated by Morales' "personal decision" to suspend Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) activities in the country. The official media service went a step further, adding that Morales also suspended CIA activity, and that the U.S. brought the suspension on itself

by "meddling in internal affairs." Despite his attacks on Ambassador Goldberg, the Bush administration, and the "empire of the north" generally, Morales was quick to state once again that bilateral relations would be re-evaluated once President-elect Obama was in office.

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Comment
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¶4. (C) True to form, Morales' mention of declaring Ambassador Goldberg persona non grata grabbed media attention and distracted focus from more pressing matters, including the Quintana corruption scandal, the falling price of natural gas (and with it the possible reduction of Morales' popular Renta Dignidad program), and his recent admission that some cocaleros are selling their coca to be processed into cocaine. As illogical as Morales' diatribes arguments are, as long as he can get mileage out of such attacks, the administration will continue to spread its vitriol.

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